2022 Family Needs Assessment Briefing

Presented by Building Bright Futures’ Families & Communities Committee and Vermont’s Early Childhood Data & Policy Center (Vermontkidsdata.org)

Wednesday, May 17th, 2023
Briefing Agenda

- Welcome
- About the Families & Communities Committee
- BBF Structure
- Overview of Family Needs Assessment
  - Methodology
  - Limitations and Demographics
  - Related Findings
  - Policy Considerations
- Policy Consideration Panel
- Q & A
The Families and Communities Committee

- Vermont’s Early Childhood Action Plan (VECAP) is a vision for 2026 to support a comprehensive and integrated early childhood system
- Committee is made up of majority parents and caregivers
- Parents are paid for their time working or attending meetings
- Helps create an early childhood system that mirrors the diverse needs of families
- Partner in big picture conversations about improving the early childhood system and decision making processes
- Develop and train family leaders
Building Bright Futures
Early Childhood Infrastructure and 450+ Person Network

The Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council and network infrastructure is charged by Act 104/Title 33, Chapter 46 to use evidence and data to monitor the system of services and provide the mechanism to support accountability.
Creation of the Family Needs Assessment

- Led by the Families & Communities Committee and supported by BBF’s State Advisory Council Network
- Funded by the Vermont Integration Prenatal to 3 (VIP-3) grant
  - Lead by Vermont Department of Health, Family and Child Health division partnering with BBF
  - 5 year grant ending July 2026

Survey Design
- Collaborative process to design the survey in spring/summer 2022
- Survey will be conducted regularly going forward
Family Needs Assessment Methodology

Parent Ambassadors
● Recruited and trained 14 Parent Ambassadors from around the state of VT

Survey Distribution
● Family Leaders supported the Parent Ambassadors as they conducted the survey from August 15 - October 15 2022

Results Analysis
● Over the next 6 months, the BBF Data Team analyzed the results, pulling out reoccurring themes from individual responses resulting in 4 Policy Considerations
Limitations

- **Self-selection bias**
  - Respondents were more likely to already be connected to resources in the early childhood system given that the survey was administered by Parent Ambassadors, their networks, and social media
  - The vast majority of respondents participated in the survey via SurveyMonkey online

- **Accessibility limitations**
  - Long survey in English
  - Some services were not specifically asked about, such as mental health services or home visiting services

- **Limited ability to fully analyze a large volume of data**
  - Limited sample size in some counties

- **Continued limitations related to the COVID-19 pandemic that may limit the generalizability of the findings**
A total of 639 responses were received, representing 1089 children.

- This is representative of about 2% of Vermont’s total child population under age 9.
Distribution of Survey Responses by County
(N=639)
### DEMOGRAPHICS

#### Race, Ethnicity & Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th># Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Answer</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th># Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Hispanic or Latino/a/x</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino/a/x</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The vast majority of respondents agreed that they had access to basic physiological needs:

- 92% of respondents agreed that they had access to safe, secure, affordable housing.
- 94% agreed they had access to reliable transportation.
- 91% of respondents agreed they had access to affordable food that met their needs and preferences.
- 92% of respondents agreed with they had access to and can afford the necessities they need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My family has access to affordable food that meets our needs and preferences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white or multiracial respondents</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White respondents</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My family has access to and can afford the necessities we need</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white or multiracial respondents</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White respondents</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My family has access to affordable food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not participate in 3squares</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participates in 3squares</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondents were given the opportunity to rate their overall experience with seven services & supports:

Respondents were asked:

*My experience with each of the following services/supports was overall positive (for example: met the needs of my family, and was easy to access):*

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Somewhat Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Respondents agreeing that their overall experience was positive by service or support:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Care/Early Learning</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Head Start</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's Services (CDS)</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home/Community Services/SAVES (K-7)</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Care</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opportunities were given to provide in-depth feedback about 3 specific services or supports.

The number of responses for each setting or support ranged based on respondents' use of that service or support.
Seven key themes emerged across the services and supports from both qualitative and quantitative responses.

Themes Related to Positive Experiences: Respondents highlighted three key interrelated themes:
- Relationships with staff and providers
- Communication
- Ease of access

- Relationships: Interactions with providers and staff are a large part of receiving any service or support.
- Communication: Coordination and communication between providers (e.g., OB/GYN & pediatric offices) were highlighted as an important part of a positive experience.
- Ease of Access: Two key factors impacted abilities to access resources: availability of timely services, and geographical proximity.

“The library offers so many great resources for families with young children. They bring their programs throughout Burlington, explain things clearly on the web, and the staff are so helpful and knowledgeable. They really make you feel like part of a community.” - Caregiver in Chittenden County
FAMILY NEEDS ASSESSMENT DATA REVIEW

Challenging Key Themes

Seven key themes emerged across the services and supports from both qualitative and quantitative responses.

Themes Related to Challenging Experiences:
Across services and supports, four common themes emerged:
- Difficulty navigating the complex early childhood system
- Difficulty accessing a service or support due to cost or inequity
- Kindergarten transitions
- Difficulty accessing a service or support due to availability

- **Navigating System:** The early childhood is complex, difficult to navigate, and respondents don’t know what services exist or where to go to find them.
- **Cost or inequity:** The cost of child care in particular was highlighted as a key barrier to access and financial comfort.
- **Kindergarten:** Respondents shared mixed experiences with their transitions to Kindergarten.
- **Availability:** Limited availability is a key barrier to access across services & supports.
“There are so many different ways that services are offered and it is not always clear how they are related. Word of mouth is a primary way that I learn about services and supports, but that is limited by my circles. Various directories are confusing and can provide conflicting information. A bunch of the resources are also far away.”
- Caregiver in Windham County

“I feel like information on various services is so scattered that it’s hard to find and access everything that’s available.”
- Caregiver in Orleans County

1. Evaluate and align Vermont’s strategies to inform and connect families to resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Statements</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know where to look or who to ask when I am looking to access a new resource</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to access needed services, resources, or support for my child(ren) and/or family.</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Not being from here originally I had no idea what systems were in place. Each system (WIC, food stamps, Medicaid etc.) has different financial eligibility requirements and it's incredibly confusing. For a long time I didn’t even know I was eligible for some financial assistance for our healthcare because I assumed it was the same as food stamps.”

- Caregiver in Caledonia County

2. Review national best practices to reduce administrative burden and promote equity of access to necessities (food, diapers, formula, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My family has access to and can afford the necessities we need</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-white or multiracial respondents</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White respondents</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“My child will start kindergarten next week. The meet and greet with her teacher was incredibly brief and really lacked in terms of introducing us to the school system. I am not at all comfortable with sending my child to the school and am not confident that she will be kept safe. I do believe that in the end, she will be safe and school will be great, but I wish that the teachers and staff made this clear to help with the anxiety of sending your child off to school.”

-Caregiver in Franklin County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitioning Pre-K to Kindergarten</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The transition went smoothly and my family and child’s needs were met</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the time of the transition, my family felt supported and knew where to go for information or questions</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Wait lists for mental health professionals in our area are outrageous!”
- Caregiver in Windsor County

“Impossible to get this service. Been waiting for a very long time for referral to [the organization] and have only received a letter saying we received it and will be in touch when we can. Unacceptable for children that need mental health services.”
- Caregiver in Franklin County

“It has not been easy for my child & I to get mental health counseling. Both my child & I were waitlisted at at least 15 plus different counseling centers or private counselors & we remained without therapy for over 2 years until we both finally got in at separate places.”
- Caregiver in Chittenden County

4. Pursue integration of mental health services throughout Vermont’s early childhood system that encourages ease of access for families with young children.
Policy Considerations

1. Evaluate and align Vermont’s strategies to inform and connect families to resources

2. Review national best practices to reduce administrative burden and promote equity of access to necessities (food, diapers, formula, etc.)

3. Support the implementation of clear guidance on the full scope of kindergarten transitions

4. Pursue integration of mental health services throughout Vermont’s early childhood system that encourages ease of access for families with young children.
Policy Considerations: Public and Private Partners Weigh in

Keely Agan
Early Childhood Nutrition Manager, Hunger Free Vermont

Emily Smith
Program Evaluator, Vermont Department of Health, Division of Family and Child Health

Laurel Omland
Director, Child, Adolescent, & Family Unit, Vermont Department of Mental Health

Becca Webb
Regional Act 166 Coordinator, Barre Unified Union School District
2022 Vermont Early Childhood Family Needs Assessment

Read the report:
https://vermontkidsdata.org/2022-family-needs-assessment/

Jen Fortman
families@buildingbrightfutures.org

Sarah Morrison
familiescochair@buildingbrightfutures.org

Connect with us!
https://buildingbrightfutures.org/vecap/families-communities/